

Cites & Insights

Crawford at Large

Libraries • Policy • Technology • Media

Sponsored by YBP Library Services

Volume 6, Number 3: February 2006

ISSN 1534-0937

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Followup Perspective

Beyond ‘Library 2.0 and “Library 2.0”’

Here’s the one-paragraph version of a not very long essay: I’m impressed by the shift in posts related to “Library 2.0” since January 6 (and claim a little credit for part of that shift). I’m convinced almost everyone involved is moving away from confrontation and bandwagons toward a series of overlapping conversations and applications. This is all to the good. If I don’t provide a lot of ongoing coverage of these conversations and applications (and I don’t expect to do so), it’s not because I don’t think they’re worthwhile or important—it’s because I don’t think I would add enough value to those conversations and applications to justify the effort or displacement of other themes. Doesn’t mean I don’t care; does mean that other venues (Meredith Farkas’ *Library Success* wiki, the growing network of blogs from those deeply involved in these conversations and applications, columns and articles in the formal professional literature, ones I don’t know about yet) better serve this situation.

Once Over Lightly: Before and After the Special Issue

Two particularly interesting posts appeared between January 6 and January 8 that didn’t make it into the special *C&I*: One posted four hours after my self-imposed deadline, one posted two days later. Meredith Farkas posted “Label 2.0” at *Information wants to be free* (meredith.wolfwater.com/wordpress/) a little after my deadline. Farkas doesn’t care for the label (or for “Web 2.0,” for that matter), as opposed to the ideas: “Library 2.0 is just a bunch of very good ideas that have been squished into a box with a trendy label

slapped on it.” She’s excited about the ideas—and wonders about approaches to carrying them out. She’s looking for ways to *sell* new technologies, ways smaller and less well-funded libraries can take advantage of them, shared success stories. She’s looking for concrete instances of the new ideas at work.

And she’s acted on it. *Library Success: A Best Practices Wiki* (www.libsuccess.org) exists and can serve as a central point for success stories (and interesting failures). I’ve bookmarked it. If you’re working on instances of these good ideas, measuring the results, or otherwise contributing, I encourage you to add to the *Library Success* wiki.

There’s more to the post—and the series of comments that runs much longer than the post itself. **Definitely worth reading.**

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Stephen M. Cohen posted “L2 ain’t nothing without W2” at *Library stuff* on January 8—partly because of his surprise at being labeled a “major Library 2.0 proponent” in a Web 2.0 environment. He’s not, as was clear in the special issue: While the concepts are worthwhile, they’re not new. “Let’s just continue to do what we’ve been doing, which is getting our patrons excited about new technologies that help them collaborate, inspire and learn.”

There’s a third post—“What is new about Library 2.0” (Jenny Levine at *ALA TechSource blog*)—that came out *very* shortly after *C&I* 6.2 was published. I’m not going to comment on the post (with its rare triple-emphases, all-caps boldface italic type, and its com-

bative tone regarding “L2 opponents”). Go **read the original** and the comments if you’re so inclined.

One more January 9 post that may not reflect any awareness of *C&I* 6.2 is particularly worth reading: “11 reasons why Library 2.0 exists and matters” by John Blyberg at blyberg.net (www.blyberg.net). I disagree with Blyberg on some of the need for massive change—but I’m not the right one to argue those points. He makes a clear, well-stated case. He is talking revolution and asserts that it’s a *mandatory* revolution. Given the shift in discussion, I believe this post may be as close to a “Library 2.0 manifesto” as we’re likely to see. **Read it** and draw your own conclusions.

Shortly thereafter

Quite a few posts appeared beginning January 9, many referring to *C&I* 6.2 even if the bloggers hadn’t read it fully yet. Some continued threads discussed in the special issue; some were from blogs I hadn’t encountered before.

January 9: TangognaT still doesn’t find the whole thing very meaningful and suspects that the “latest development in social software is probably not of much interest to the average public library patron.” TangognaT wants a public library that’s convenient and open on summer weekends. *Endless hybrids* had “Why Library 2.0 is dangerous”—the terminology, not the concepts—with a jab at “evangelical buzzwords.” The post ends, “My prediction (and hope): the services represented by Library 2.0 will simply, one day, be called **the library**.” A Norwegian blogger at *Librarian 1.5* (lib1point5.wordpress.com) offered a trio of posts, one noting the situation in Norway, one disappointed that *C&I* 6.2 failed to “sum things up” (which, as I commented, was because I found that impossible to do), and one offering the blogger’s own brief version of what it all means. The posts are all worth reading.

January 10: *VALISblog* noted the special issue and discussed Levine’s post. *Infomancy* is looking at this from a school library perspective in an ongoing series of posts that you should **pay attention to** if you’re a school librarian or care about them. (The URL’s a little unusual: schoolof.info/infomancy/) *LibrarianInBlack* suggested that her (Sarah Houghton’s) definition is lacking and sees virtue in concentrating on improving services for users. *dave’s blog* took the interesting tack of claiming that it’s *others* who are drawing a line in the sand—librarians who say “I would really rather not learn anything new, but would still like to

be a librarian.” I’d agree that anyone saying that, or automatically assuming that new tools *can’t* be useful in libraries, has chosen an unfortunate and (with rare exceptions) untenable position. Travis Ennis commented on *C&I* 6:2 in the context of being more interested in the new tools and attitudes than in names. *See also...* (Steve Lawson) posted “A library 2.0 hang-over,” a first-rate post covering a lot of ground in a few well-chosen words. *Information wants to be free* (Meredith Farkas) continued to shine with “Let’s make libraries better, ok?”—and John Blyberg labeled *C&I* 6.2 “an audit of the current state of L2.” That’s not a bad label. And, to my surprise and pleasure, one of my RLG colleagues who’s on the team that does *hangtogether.org* posted a brief and very complimentary pointer to the special issue.

January 11: A lull, at least in the posts I chose to print—primary two from Travis Ennis (libfoo.blogspot.com), a library school student who is thinking a lot about this stuff and concludes that the *term* Library 2.0 needs to go away because it gets in the way of the many different areas of interest and work that can improve libraries. One key here: “*different* areas of interest and work” (emphasis added): It’s not all one thing. Another interesting discussion was beginning, certainly related to some of the possibilities lumped together in that term: North Carolina State University released a new online catalog interface, which drew (and continues to draw) considerable attention and comment. It deserves attention and discussion.

Stephen Abram’s December 2005 “InfoTech” in *Information Outlook* and similar essay in the December 2005 *SirsiDynix OneSource* are also worth pointing out—but I’m not going to comment on them.

What I’m seeing—in these posts and quite a few others that I didn’t save or mention—is an increasing emphasis on how, what, and why, with much less interest in movements, bandwagons, terminology, or revolutions. Librarians want to see how these tools can be applied, want to *apply* them, want to share knowledge—and, I hope, want to see whether the tools are actually having the desired effect. There are exceptions, people who want to see the bandwagon continue, who disparage any questioning of terminology or the novelty of the concepts, but those exceptions are relatively rare.

Regarding *C&I* Coverage

I believe at least four different but overlapping conversations need to take place, along with clusters of

real-world experiments, applications, measures of success, and (once in a while) admissions of failures (or “experiments that terminate” if you prefer):

- How best to take advantage of new tools and techniques sometimes called “Web 2.0” in order to offer new services and improve existing services within libraries—not because librarians and library vendors don’t produce useful tools, but because so much can be leveraged from work already being done elsewhere.
- How (and when) to provide plumbing in library systems such that *users* can build their own tools based on library information...without abandoning library precepts such as privacy and confidentiality, and without ignoring those who aren’t planning to do their own programming.
- What changes should and can be made in integrated library systems (or modular replacements for integrated library systems) so that libraries can extend those systems into broader areas and integrate library information into a broader web infosphere—and whether (and where) it’s feasible to replace heavy-duty integrated systems with something more agile and contemporary.
- How to reach new audiences or old audiences in new ways—and some clarification as to what roles a particular public (or academic, or school, or special) can and should play in the lives of its users and non-users.

I believe it’s important to note that these are not all one conversation, although they all overlap. I believe it’s critical to remember that each public library, each academic library, each school library, each special library is a distinct entity (or set of entities) serving a distinct set of populations. I believe most public libraries *do* matter and will continue to matter—that today’s resources and services will serve libraries and communities well in the future, which is no reason to stop looking for new and better ways to serve.

What I *don’t* believe: That I can add much value to most of the conversations that need to take place and that are taking place—or that I’m a good judge of the new tools and techniques, for that matter. Not because they don’t matter to me; not because I won’t be reading about them; not because I don’t have opinions. Because there are so many other people out there who are closer to the action and in a better position to comment.

There’s also the matter of space, time and energy. Bad enough that I managed to break one of the “modest expectations” in *C&I* 6.1 just three weeks after stating it (“No fewer than 12 and no more than 30 pages per issue”). Copyright issues aren’t going away; library access to scholarship continues to be an intricate story with considerable copyright overlap; there are lots of things to say about net media where I *do* feel I add value; and there are many other issues I’d like to discuss.

Contribute to the *Library Success* wiki. Build other wikis if that’s not enough. Read the relevant blogs (by now, you should have a good idea what they are) and pay attention to new voices that emerge. Look at the new applications. See how they could apply to your library. Most of the people involved in these areas are only too eager to share their knowledge; take advantage of that. If *C&I* 6.2 served as an audit or baseline, I’m happy. If it played a role in shifting the focus from a bandwagon or movement to a whole bunch of overlapping initiatives—I’m happier.

©4: Locking Down Technology **Analog Hole and Broadcast Flag**

The good news: Congress didn’t pass any significant copyright legislation in 2005. The bad news: Big Media is back, stumping for *even more* ambitious efforts to eradicate fair use and assure that they have total control over all uses of “their” creations.

What may in the end be the *other* good news: The initiatives discussed here are so extreme that they could convince more legislators to pay attention to balance. It’s possible that sheer gall and overreaching could wind up biting RIAA and MPAA in the butt. Unfortunately, that’s not a safe bet.

When DMCA was passed, the analog hole was the safety valve: You could always exercise fair use rights by making an analog copy of the DRM-heavy digital resource and using that copy to serve your needs. With the Broadcast Flag, the analog hole was the safety valve: At least you’d be able to make a copy (probably VHS-quality) of a broadcast, even if the flag prevented digital copies. But behind those assurances, Big Media was never too shy about its ultimate aim: To close the analog hole, since what can be converted

from digital to analog can be reconverted to digital—without the DRM that was in the digital original.

Thus we have the Digital Transition Content Security Act, one of three locking-down bills introduced in early November 2005. It's designed to close the second half of the hole (reconverting analog to digital), initially for video—but even at that, it would spell the end of open innovation, open-source software for open-platform general-purpose computers, and any plausible sense of fair use. It's only the opening stage, to be sure: If it passed, you can *assume* an audio analog hole act would follow. Of the other two bills, one provides the FCC with the power to enact the Broadcast Flag that the courts properly said it doesn't have. The other, interestingly, says that satellite and digital radio shouldn't be able to provide effective downloading/recording capabilities.

One peculiarity shines through informed discussion of all these proposals: They won't stop commercial piracy. They won't even slow it down. Their proponents don't pretend that they will. What the bills *will* do, if enacted and upheld, is keep users—ordinary citizens—from taking full advantage of the entertainment they've paid for or received over the open airwaves. These “speed bumps” will undermine fair use without inhibiting large-scale piracy.

Other ©4 stuff

Other ©4-related pieces have been lying fallow: the Grokster outcome, P2P, and things like that. The stuff's been sitting around too long. I'm scrapping it to make a clean start. There's one nasty little piece of proposed copyright tightening, the Intellectual Property Protection Act of 2005, that deserves quick notice. It would remove copyright *registration* as a requirement for *criminal* prosecution of infringement. It's called a clarification, but it's a one-way clarification. Given that most Big Media properties are registered, one wonders why such a “clarification” is even needed except as one more way to terrorize file sharers and the like. (Oh, it also clarifies that *attempting* to infringe copyright is just as criminal as *succeeding*, and broadens other definitions to make it easier to prosecute for copyright infringement.)

A quick chronological scan of interrelated items and comments about them, as usual.

Michael Powell's invisible legacy

Way back in January 2005, J.D. Lasica wrote this piece for *Reason* (www.reason.com/hod/jdl1012605.shtml). Powell was chair of the FCC. On his watch,

penalties against broadcast “indecenty” got much tougher—enough so that, for example, *Family Guy* reruns have a *cartoon* baby's butt *pixilated* because Fox is nervous about fines. Lasica's optimistic enough to believe “we'll soon boot the Puritans out of power,” and I hope he's right—but the bulk of the piece is about Powell's attempt to transform the FCC into the Federal Computer Commission. That's Lasica's reading of the Broadcast Flag (which at the time was scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2005).

Lasica agrees that the Broadcast Flag wouldn't prevent redistribution of digital TV: “We already know the pirates...will continue to capture digital television shows...Instead, the public will bear the brunt...” For example, more than 75 million current DVD players would not be able to play flagged TV programs recorded with post-flag DVD recorders.

Lasica sees part of the problem as the FCC “treating us as consumers rather than users” and endorsing Hollywood's idea that consumer electronics, including computers, should be “no more than playback devices for Big Entertainment content.” He notes instances of *real* fair use that the Broadcast Flag could prevent. James M. Burger, a tech lobbyist, puts it bluntly: “You're ceding control of the devices in people's homes to the movie studios.” Lasica notes that the RIAA is pushing for a similar flag for digital radio. Lasica concludes:

If the broadcast flag for video and audio worked, that would be one thing. But it's obvious even before the rule takes effect that the flag will do nothing to stop Internet piracy. A simple digital-to-analog conversion will defeat the flag. But the flag will clamp down on fair use rights, stifle innovation, turn hobbyists and tinkers into criminals, create inconvenience, raise prices, impose new regulatory burdens—and infuriate law-abiding citizens who no longer control the technology in their own homes.

Is it any wonder that Powell is skipping town a few months before the public begins howling?

Unfortunately, there's some reason to believe that most of the public wouldn't howl—and that the hundreds of thousands who *do* would be ignored, at least by the FCC (just as they ignored thousands of comments opposing the Broadcast Flag). Most consumers, I'm afraid, are just that: Consumers. And most of the magazines I read that *should* have been crying bloody murder were assuming the flag was a *fait accompli* that was truly needed to save the poor studios; don't rock the boat or anything. There have been exceptions, but surprisingly few.

Copyright protection of digital television: The “Broadcast Flag”

That’s the title of a May 11, 2005 CRS Report for Congress; I haven’t seen a newer version. It’s a good quick intro to the issue, even if it does assume that the broadcast flag was really about “reconciling” competing interests, as opposed to slanting the playing field toward content holders’ interests.

One notable change from the tone of Big Media propaganda: Three words in this sentence between the first and second comma...

Digital content, like other media, can be relatively easily duplicated and distributed, especially with the aid of the Internet.

Like other media. Indeed. It goes on to say that *unlike* other media, duplication does not degrade the original. That’s wrong on two counts. Quibbling, duplication of *any* medium doesn’t degrade the original, it degrades the copy. More significantly, most analog media can be digitized without noticeable loss of quality—and that’s the end of the degradation, if the digitized version is stored in lossless form. The same paragraph understates: “Content providers have greeted this new technology with some trepidation.”

According to CRS, the supposed “compromise” report did *not* require that all machines recognize the Broadcast Flag; that’s different than the FCC rulemaking. Theoretically, the flag doesn’t prevent distribution of content to non-compliant devices (that is, older devices), but it wouldn’t take much of a change to remove that loophole. (The Analog Hole bill comes very close: I see a change in which, at best, any legacy equipment could only get broadcasts in 720x480 pixels at 30 frames per second, essentially standard-definition broadcast quality or “480i.”)

In the “possible implications” section, the report says the goal of the flag was “not to impede a consumer’s ability to copy or use content lawfully in the home,” but that’s not the reality: “Current technological limitations have the potential to hinder some activities which might normally be considered ‘fair use’ under existing copyright law.” (Sad that the CRS uses scare quotes around fair use.) In fact, it’s not potential: There are known straightforward cases, one or two mentioned here. The report also notes that, despite the urging of consumer groups, the FCC declined to adopt language to prevent the broadcast flag on news programs and works that are already in the public domain: Even this nod to the public interest was too much for the FCC. The report ends with a summary

of *ALA vs. FCC*, in which the Broadcast Flag was struck down...for now.

Smaller items in May and June 2005

Ed Felten pointed out an interesting story from *National Journal Tech Daily* in a May 24, 2005 *Freedom to tinker* post. Mike Godwin of Public Knowledge was on a panel in the District of Columbia along with some people from Big Media. Godwin made this comment about the Broadcast Flag and similar measures:

“I don’t want to be the legislator or the legislative staff person in charge of shutting off connectivity and compatibility for consumers, and I don’t think you want to do that either. It’s going to make consumers’ lives hell.”

Responses to this reasonable statement? Rick Lane of News Corp. (Fox et al): “Compatibility is not a goal.” An NBC Universal person seconded the comment. So much for your DVD players and other devices! As Felten notes, “To consumers, compatibility is a goal.” The punch line: “The most dangerous place in Washington is between Americans and their televisions.”

But only if Americans recognize there’s a danger—and blame the proper parties.

➤ *News.com* ran a pair of commentaries on May 26: “Why the broadcast flag should go forward” by Dan Glickman (MPAA head) and “Why the broadcast flag won’t work” by Jim Burger, a media attorney. Glickman talks about “protecting the magic of the movies” and, of course, claims that his interest is making certain that we’ll keep seeing movies and TV shows on free television. He makes the odd claim that, without proper protections, “it will be increasingly difficult to show movies, television shows or even baseball games on free television.” *Baseball games?* Naturally, he assures us that the *only* effect of the flag is to “assure a continued supply of high-value programming” and that the flag “does not inhibit copying.” He talks about the “consensus” among consumer electronics and media companies—and ends, “In the end, it will be the consumers who suffer the most if the broadcast flag is not mandated for the digital era.” How many years have you seen HDTV logos on programs? For more years than that, the studios have threatened—promised—that they won’t show the good stuff without a flag. And for that many years, the studios have failed to make good on their threat. Burger’s response is odd in that he *favours* protection—

but via encryption. He notes the FCC authority problem, failure to prove any real threat, and the lack of real protection. He notes that all you need is software to demodulate a TV signal, so that the FCC would require absolute regulation over all software development to make the flag work. He notes that, when Judge Edwards asked whether the FCC would have jurisdiction over an internet-attached *washing machine*, the answer was yes. What he doesn't mention, more's the pity, is fair use; in fact, Burger appears to be just as much a protectionist as Glickman—through different means. It's an odd debate, like having Bill Frist debate Tom DeLay.

- Donna Wentworth of *Copyfight* quotes a Slashdot commentary that's partly right. I'd agree with the first and last sentences: "The broadcast flag is just another tool devised by the MPAA to help insure that if people want to watch something beyond the original air-date, they'll have to go out and buy it... By insisting that there be a broadcast flag, the MPAA is basically saying, "We don't care about your right to fair-use, we want your money and we'll get it, one way or another." (Wentworth rewords that: "It's not so much that they don't care about fair use. They simply want to sell our rights back to us at a premium." I'd put it another way: The MPAA *denies the existence* of fair use and wants to destroy it.) I disagree with the core paragraph, which begins, "Fact is, by the time a production makes it to broadcast television, it's made all the money it's going to make." That's not true. Some *original* TV productions lose money on airing with the expectation of making a profit on syndication and DVD sales. Which doesn't justify removing fair use and other limitations on absolute copyright.
- Sure enough, some Congressfolk tried to sneak the Broadcast Flag in with a budget bill, specifically the digital TV transition bill. One of them (a Democrat: copyright extremism knows no party lines) even said "This is really a budget bill, not a telecom policy bill"—while attempting to set telecom policy within it. (As reported at *Copyfight* on May 27, 2005.) It didn't happen, possibly because Joe

Barton (R-TX), chair of the House Commerce Committee, thought it was a bad idea.

Broadcast Flag authorization legislation: Key considerations for Congress

This sad seven-page document was issued by the Center for Democracy & Technology (CDT) in August 2005. It "offers recommendations for Congress"—not to dump the Broadcast Flag as a bad idea, but on the "types of limits that Congress should consider."

CDT agrees that digital broadcasts are "susceptible to large-scale piracy, and that this poses a serious threat to the owners of video content"—claims that have never been demonstrated. The discussion notes how many devices would be impacted and that the Flag "could stymie technological innovation and the deployment of exciting new consumer technologies"—but says *not a word* about fair use and citizens' rights. To CDT, I guess, we're just consumers.

The recommendations call for a category of news coverage that can't be flagged, but the only real "consumer protection" is to "require notice to consumers concerning the types of pre-flag devices with which the new, flag-compliant devices will not interoperate." Since that notice would be *after* the flag is adopted, it boils down to "You're screwed, but we'll tell you exactly how."

There's an odd call for "clear and narrow parameters," noting that even in advance of any regulatory denials, three of four applicants proposing secure limited internet transmission *withdrew* the capability before the ruling.

CDT seems to understand that it isn't about commercial piracy at all: They state that the flag's purpose should be to "effectively frustrate an *ordinary user* from engaging in *indiscriminate redistribution* of flagged content..." [Emphasis in the original.]

As an August 23 *News.com* story notes, "One non-profit advocacy group is breaking ranks with its usual allies." As other commentators noted, the most unfortunate thing about the CDT paper is the implicit assumption that a broadcast flag is inevitable.

Analog Hole legislation

An October 31, 2005 "Deep links" item at the Electronic Frontier Foundation, "Halloween on the hill," notes a special House Judiciary Committee hearing involving the broadcast flag—but also the RIAA's "insane digital radio requirements" (EFF's phrasing, and I'm not sure I disagree) and, surprise surprise, "the Thing from the Analog Hole."

I read the 35-page draft of the latter proposed legislation, HR4569, marking it for comment. I believe EFF's comments are right on the money (not something I always say about EFF's stance), so I'll quote most of Danny O'Brien's post in lieu of most of my own comments (correcting a few British spellings and punctuation along the way):

Here's what the proposed law says, in a nutshell:

Every consumer analog video input device manufactured in the United States will be, within a year, forced to obey not one, but two new copy restriction technologies...

And what might these MPAA-specified, government-mandated technologies do?

They prescribe how many times (if at all) the analog video signal might be copied—and enforce it. This is the future world that was accidentally triggered for TiVo users a few months ago, when viewers found themselves lectured by their own PVR that their recorded programs would be deleted after a few days.

But it won't just be your TiVo: anything that brings analog video into the digital world will be shackled. Forget about buying a VCR with an un-DRMed digital output. Forget about getting a TV card for your computer that will willingly spit out an open, clear format.

Forget, realistically, that your computer will ever be under your control again. To allow any high-res digitization to take place at all, a new graveyard of digital content will have to be built within your PC.

Freshly minted digital video from authorized analog-to-digital converters will be marshaled here and here only, where they will be forced to comply with the battery of restrictions dictated by Hollywood.

In this Nightmare Before Turing, video content will be crippled, far more than it ever was in its old analog home. They will only be able to be recorded using "Authorized Recording Methods," or "Bound Recording Methods," and the entire subsystem will have to obey "robustness" requirements that will make circumvention for fair use—and open source development in general—near impossible.

The unprotected analog outputs of computers will be, in perpetuity, restricted to either DRM-laden standards, or to a "constrained image," "no more than 350,000 pixels." Analog video which has been branded as "do not copy," will last for only ninety minutes only in the digital world—and will be erased, literally frame by frame, megabyte by megabyte, from your PC, without your control. You'll watch a two hour film, and as you watch the final half hour, the first few scenes will be being dissolved away by statute.

Moore's Law won't dictate how technology might improve and innovate any longer: in this Halloween future, the new limit for technological innovation is No More's

Law, where your specs are spelled out and frozen by Congress in a law drafted by standards that were laughable in the last century.

And this is just a plain description of how this might affect our technology.

Quite beside that, the law is littered with throwaway requirements that would smack our economy and social norms in the face as well.

The MPAA, for instance, graciously permits a few, precious, normal analog-to-digital converters to exist. But only on "professional devices."

What's a professional device? Well, just as in the Audio Home Recording Act (AHRA), it's a device that is intended for use by recording professionals. (AHRA you will recall, was the law that mandated copy protection on all but "professional" DAT recorders, thereby killing the technology almost stone dead in the commercial marketplace).

Unlike that Act, in the MPAA's new bill, "if a device is ... commonly purchased by persons other than [commercial copiers], then such device shall not be considered a 'professional device'."

In other words, you can sell standard unrestricted digitizers, until you become too popular. Then magically, you're liable. For not more than \$500,000 or five years imprisonment for a first offence. Good luck explaining that market condition to your backers.

Oh, and don't think you can just obey the law as it stands now: if the...technologies prescribed by the law become "materially ineffective," then the government can upgrade those standards, and demand compliance on the new spec.

The trustworthy, well-funded technological powerhouse they've chosen to give this new responsibility of monitoring, designing, and managing the upgrading of every video converter in the United States? That uncontroversial institution, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

It's genuinely shocking to us that the entertainment industry would bring even one of their standard technological pipe-dreams to the table now, even as they are still reeling from the reception the broadcast flag has so far received in the courts and in congressional committees.

But to bring this: an invasive, future-crippling Frankenstein monster of a DMCA anti-circumvention bill, bolted together with an overbroad broadcast-flag restriction, to stand guard at every exit from the analog video world into digital future, is breathtaking.

It's bad enough that Hollywood's customers have had to drag them and their content kicking and screaming from dying business models into a new era. Now they seem intent on putting up government roadblocks to stop any of us from leaving their Haunted Mansion of dying analog video media, into world of a living, developing, digital future. Spooky indeed.

EFF tends toward hyperbole at times. Not this time. This is a fair rendition of the bill and its implications. Incidentally, “no more than 350,000 pixels” (that is, ordinary TV resolution) is accompanied by “30 frames per second”—so it really means “480i,” no better than standard TV. And although *this* legislation only affects video, I would bet that, if approved, RIAA would follow close behind with a request to extend it to audio. In which case, given the sheer difficulty of doing analog-mode audio marks that aren’t obtrusive, I can’t see any way the system could be enforced without “guilty until proven innocent” provisions for *all* file copying.

The proposed law has some of that Napoleonic Code feel to it. “Innocent violations” may have damages removed—but the “violator sustains the burden of proving...that the violator was not aware.” Non-profit libraries and archives may have damages waived—but again, those institutions *must prove* that they weren’t aware of a violation. Guilty until proven innocent: A great step forward in American law!

A November 1, 2005 *Boing Boing* post calls this legislation “shockingly ambitious” and calls it “the Broadcast Flag on steroids,” noting that, had it been around in 1976, the VCR would be illegal—and now it would turn “huge classes of technology into something that exists only at the sufferance of the studios.” Here’s what MPAA people say about rewinding, fast-forwarding, skipping ads, place shifting and the like: “Doing this stuff has value, and if it has value, we should be able to charge money for it.” There it is, plain and simple: Studios should have the force of law behind their intent to squeeze every last dime they can from “consumers.” The post notes that the legislation would not *at all* prevent piracy—but it would shut down perfectly legal things you can do today. “Any lawmaker who supports this is an idiot. Americans will forgive a lot of sins from their elected representatives, but there’s one thing they won’t stand for and that’s breaking their TVs.”

Similar cries of informed outrage appeared elsewhere—at Public Knowledge, *Copyfight*, and the other places you’d expect. (*Furdlog* noted at the end of the year that even the “industry’s hometown paper,” the *L.A. Times*, thought the legislation was stupid.)

Other October and November developments

An October 5, 2005 *Copyfight* post, “Night of the living Broadcast Flag,” notes Cory Doctorow’s assertion that the Flag will have to be killed a dozen more times before Congress finally understands how bad it is—

and quotes a sample letter that Public Knowledge suggests be sent to members of the committees considering the Flag. The letter points out that “There is no ‘narrow’ way to implement the broadcast flag,” that the related proposal for a digital radio protection scheme “would probably halt digital radio rollout” and could harm the transition to digital TV, and that it limits fair use, educational use, and innovation. Donna Wentworth adds a specific point for open-source enthusiasts: Open-source software would be “non-robust” in Flag terminology, thus illegal.

An October 10, 2005 post attempts to answer two mysteries: Why 20 representatives sent an open letter pledging support for the flag and why one lobbyist is suddenly claiming that the DMCA is about the freedom to make contracts. The first is clear enough: Because the Flag wasn’t assured passage. The letter from the representatives repeats “free, over-the-air television” *eight times*, including four times in four consecutive sentences. Of course, as noted here and elsewhere, the threat to boycott digital TV is empty. The DMCA aspect is a bit convoluted, and has to do with an attempt at “compromise”: If the MPAA wants the Flag, it needs to accept fair-use limitations on DMCA. But no: Changing DMCA would infringe upon the freedom of corporations to impose contracts. Now there’s freedom in action!

The Analog Hole bill was introduced just days before the November 3, 2005 House Judiciary Committee meeting, as was RIAA’s “insane digital radio requirements” notion. I read through four statements from that hearing, by Gigi B. Sohn (Public Knowledge), Mitch Bainwol (RIAA), Dan Glickman (MPAA), and Michael Petricone (Consumer Electronics Association). Against, For, For, Against: You can figure that out without reading the statements.

I annotated each statement with the expectation of noting some interesting points here. That may be more detail than you need; for now, it’s almost enough to say that this trio of bills represents shockingly bad legislation. Gigi B. Sohn outlines just *how* bad (and the extent to which the legislation would harm business, not help it).

Mitch Bainwol repeats the disproven claim that P2P has “already devastated the music and other content industries,” asserts that any new radio features need to be *licensed* by RIAA (and considers automatic downloading for digital radio such a new feature), misstates AHRAs nature and intent, and seems to grumble mightily over the fact that radio broadcasters

don't have to negotiate individual permissions with RIAA companies. There's the claim that other broadcasting services "are prohibited from enabling listeners to make copies of the songs broadcast in their programs"—you know, it's *impossible* to capture streaming radio or, say, over-the-air radio! We're told that people who can make free copies of what they're listening to (e.g., radio listeners) won't purchase the tunes—so much for iTunes! It's an astonishing statement but quite typical for RIAA.

As to Glickman of the MPAA—need you ask? Glickman's a former Congressman; wonder why he got the MPAA job? He *admits* that real pirates will break any security measures—and *flatly claims* that a thousand "otherwise law abiding citizens" sharing movies with friends "has the same impact as a single commercial pirate selling a thousand copies of a movie on a street corner." There it is: One shared copy, a thousand commercial piracies: Same thing, once you add it up. So MPAA says "Lock down the citizens, since we're slow to get the real pirates." Such a civic-minded group. The analog hole was the safety valve for DMCA. Now MPAA wants to get rid of the safety valve. *Of course* the group claims there's consensus. *Of course* they call consumer groups "self styled 'consumer groups'." Glickman manages to imply that EFF agreed to the Analog Hole proposal, if you don't read his sentences very carefully. And, to be sure, we hear that most "typical consumers" will never even know that the Broadcast Hole and analog lockdown exist; after all, who would ever try to play a 2007 DVD-R on a 2005 DVD player? To read Glickman's statement is to understand the sheer contempt that MPAA must feel for us poor rubes who watch Their Movies and Their TV Shows.

Petricone, who also speaks for the Home Recording Rights Coalition, naturally opposes the proposals at hand, given their "potential to put the future usefulness of [CEA's] products at risk, and to make our customers very, very unhappy." CEA represents a considerably larger business enterprise than MPAA and RIAA put together (and, unlike RIAA, it's not mostly foreign-owned)—so it *should* carry a little weight. Petricone notes that Big Media first says it's satisfied with a compromise—but then "keeps coming back to the Congress with proposals to subject new legitimate consumer products to prior restraints on their usefulness in the hands of consumers."

Petricone makes his pro-copyright stance clear: CEA and HRRC were partners in developing the

DMCA. The assumption was that DMCA struck the needed balance, although it's a balance that largely favors copyright owners over consumers. He notes that the FCC-adopted Broadcast Flag is *broader* than the version CEA consulted on. More to the point, the Analog Hole legislation is much worse: It *explicitly* restricts home copying and imposes a mandate on "virtually *every* product and piece of software capable of digitizing analog video signals, and on every digital device capable of storing them." (Which includes *every* PC, whether or not it has a tuner.) He reminds us that HDTV has actually been around for quite a long time, roughly a decade, somehow surviving without the Broadcast Flag and with the Analog Hole. There's a lot more here, much of it detail about the failings of the Analog Hole legislation. (The very long bill was sprung on commenters *three days* before the hearing; he calls it "largely incomprehensible" even to experienced readers.)

He also discusses the third act, the HD Radio Content Protection Act, in some detail. It's an atrocity, and you may understand that better from his remarks (which should be easy enough to find.) He notes the lack of a demonstrated problem for this solution, that recording of digital broadcasts should be covered by AHRA, and that this introduction is essentially a betrayal by RIAA of its explicit agreements.

What happens next? We shall see—and with luck, Congressfolk will begin to look at proposals such as these and recognize just how extreme MPAA and RIAA have become in their attempts to lock down consumer rights and technological innovation.

Library Stuff Perspective

Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources

It's a fat paperback, 296 8.5x11" pages. ISBN 1-55653-364-0. You can order it for \$19 from OCLC (www.oclc.org/reports/), read it online or download portions to print, or download the whole thing—but if you want the whole thing in full color, it's probably cheaper to order it (and a whole lot easier to deal with a perfect-bound book than two-thirds of a ream of paper). The subtitle is "A report to the OCLC membership," and the title page lists six principal contributors and three others charged with graphics, layout and editing. It is, in some ways, the sequel to

The 2003 OCLC Environmental Scan: Pattern Recognition, this time based on a 2005 online survey carried out by Harris Interactive, Inc.

The topics explored in the survey include the perceptions and preferences of information consumers; users' relationship with and use of libraries, including usage of and familiarity with electronic information resources; awareness of libraries and resources offered; the "Library" brand and its ubiquity and universality; trust of libraries and their resources; and people's perceptions of the library's purpose/mission.

I don't have a comprehensive critique. For that matter, I haven't read the last 70 pages of the publication. I do have a few notes and comments.

The short version: Even given *acknowledged* methodological limitations (and some problems I don't believe are fully acknowledged), this is the most extensive and legitimate international survey of its type in many years. **It's worth studying.**

Some will find the revelations disturbing and surprising. The authors don't find the results surprising: "The findings presented in this report do not surprise, they confirm." I don't regard the findings as either surprising or terribly disturbing as a whole. I believe the results can be used to consider the contemporary world and the place of public and (to a lesser degree) academic libraries within that world. They can further be used to fuel calls for change, but such calls should include thoughtful examination of what's feasible and realistic—and of whether things have really changed all that much. It appears clear from the multiway conversation that's taken place at *It's all good* and elsewhere that there are differences of opinion on those counts, as there should be.

If you don't want to buy the report and can't see printing out 296 pages (all in color, but you can get by with grayscale printouts), you can skip the appendices. That brings the page count down to 154 pages. You might be able to trim further, but I think that's a bad idea. You should read all 154 pages, the introduction and parts 1 through 5, before drawing conclusions. The writers spent a lot of time examining the survey data and drawing conclusions that link together disparate chunks of data; you should spend time going through their narrative (there's not that much text; there are a *lot* of charts and graphs).

Methodology

I'm not fond of "information" as a description of the role of public and academic libraries, and I'm correspondingly not fond of "information consumers" as a

label for those who do or should use such libraries. That sets up an immediate dissonance in my reading. Take four questions at the bottom of page vii:

How are libraries perceived by today's information consumer? Do libraries still matter? On what level? Will library use likely increase or decrease in the future?

I don't see the second, third and fourth questions as following from the first—because, in my opinion, the real question (for public libraries) is "How are libraries perceived by today's citizens?" The answer there is pretty clear: Favorably. They still matter.

When I'm being an "information consumer," my local public library plays a distinctly secondary role: It's there to fill in the blanks, not to provide the majority of my information needs. That would be true with or without the internet. I believe that's true for most people whose finances are such that they can afford newspapers, magazines, television news, and (more recently) the internet, as well as other sources of information. [/soapbox]

When I'm being a Mountain View taxpayer and citizen, however, the local library is an exceptionally good use of my tax dollars, one that provides books and other resources, expert advice on the rare occasions when I feel the need, a safety net for those who *can't* afford other sources of information (and an extension to my own resources), an environment and set of programs that encourage kids to read and to love reading—and you know the rest. I'm more than happy to pay for that "building full of books" (and more) even if I never use it. So, by all accounts, are most people. Until 2006, I never used the library's extensive online databases except at the library, because doing so from home was inconvenient—but I didn't begrudge the money that went to pay for those databases. Mountain View's library has better than average funding; I've never seen serious calls to reduce that funding.

Pay attention to the facts about Salinas: Once it was clear that the libraries *could not* survive without new money and library funding was separated from various other public works, the citizens voted to fund the libraries. There are exceptions, but citizens and taxpayers are mostly willing to pay for public libraries, not as "symbols of wealth" but as essential community services. I pay for firefighters and police as well, and *hope* that I never need their services. On the other hand, most people *do* use public libraries at least occasionally, as this survey once again confirms.

Do libraries still matter? Nothing in this survey raises doubts in my mind. Will library use likely increase or decrease in the future? Here I think we need to look both at the survey results and at *reality*, where public library use typically increases over time within the U.S. (I can't speak for the UK or Australia, or other areas studied).

The survey was large, although not overwhelmingly so: 1,854 U.S. respondents, enough for reasonable statistical inferences, plus 491 from Canada, 468 from the UK, and 535 from Australia, Singapore, and India—in all three cases, small universes for strong statistical inference. The survey was online and that's stated as a weakness: If the one-third of Americans who basically don't go online have different expectations of libraries, that throws off the results significantly. Given other surveys that suggest that, at least within academia, heavy users of online resources are also likely to be heavy users of libraries, I'm not ready to push that weakness.

The survey was also *a survey*—and a long survey at that, with 83 questions. As I've said elsewhere, I believe a growing number of us just don't deal with surveys, and particularly long surveys. I believe quite a few of us who read, who have active intellectual lives, and who may be strong library supporters just *will not take the time* for surveys (and are likely to mistrust those carrying out surveys). Ask yourself and ten people around you: Do you respond to most surveys? Would you respond to an 83-question survey? Unfortunately, there is no way to address this weakness: You can't do a survey that isn't a survey, so the best you can do is recognize that it's only a survey of those willing to take part in very long surveys. Thus, every finding in the report bears the invisible qualifier “of those willing to respond to very long online surveys.” I have no idea whether that weakens the results.

I have one other problem with elements of the survey and the report: The term “online library.” I have *no idea whatsoever* what that means—and suspect many of those answering the survey also had no idea what an online library is. Is it a library's website? That's not a library any more than Hilton's website is one or more hotels. I don't believe Mountain View has an online library, although the library's website will let me see what I have out, renew books if there aren't holds on them, and use online databases. The other four “information sources” seem clear enough, although hardly exhaustive: Search engines, Libraries, Bookstores, and Online bookstores. But I'm hardly

surprised that a substantial portion of respondents have either “never heard of” online libraries or “just know the name” or are “not very familiar” (55% overall, 56% of U.S. respondents). I'd probably answer in one of those three categories.

To their credit, the authors do not attempt to demonstrate statistical validity for any of the results: I don't see comments about statistical tests and thresholds. They provide the percentages. Once in a while, it pays to look at page xiii, where actual numbers appear, to note the modest size of most sample subpopulations.

Findings and Conclusions

I have three pages of notes on points I found particularly interesting—and I'm going to ignore most of them. Despite the notes above, I believe the report stands on its own, and it's clear enough for any librarian to draw their own conclusions.

A few curiosities and mild surprises may be worth noting, particularly given the assertion by some library people that the younger generations have abandoned public libraries:

- For an *entirely online* survey, it seems remarkable that 26% of respondents have not used email and 28% have never used an internet search engine.
- 96% of respondents have used public libraries, and 73% (overall and U.S.) continue to use them at least once a year. 75% of U.S. respondents hold library cards (the UK contingent falls to 59%). Only 27% have visited a library web site—and that's really not too surprising.
- 31% of U.S. respondents visit their public libraries at least monthly; 55% at least several times a year. The figures for teenagers (ages 14-17): 34% and 62%. For young adults (18-24): 30% and 52%. If these generations have abandoned public libraries, they've done so in an unusual manner—and, by the way, 80% of them have library cards. College students use public libraries a *lot* more than I would have expected: 49% monthly or better, 65% at least several times a year.
- Only 18% of U.S. respondents believe their use of libraries will decrease; 22% believe it will increase. For young adults, the “decrease” number is a bit higher (22%)—but so is the “increase” number (31%). (Teenagers? 12%

decrease—the lowest of any age group—and 41% increase—the highest of any age group.) This does not say to me that libraries are on their way out.

- Strangely, 27% of *non-card-holders* believe their library use will decrease.
- Only 5% of respondents say they've used RSS feeds. I suspect this number is low and that quite a few people use such feeds without recognizing them as such. I'm less surprised that 49% of respondents have never used IM and that 84% haven't used blogs. I'm astonished that 15% say they've used ebooks, given the sales figures for ebooks.
- People mostly learn about new electronic resources ("other than search engines") from friends (with links from websites and news media close behind). I suspect that may also be true for traditional resources. "Hey, you gotta read X" from a trusted friend is more compelling than any other recommendation.
- *People like libraries*: 80% favorable ratings from U.S. respondents, including 47% "very favorable." (Here again, UK libraries might reasonably be concerned: The figures are only 64% and 30%.) Heck, even 64% of *non-card-holders* view libraries favorably.
- OK, so "kids these days" are using libraries—but have they abandoned books? Not so you'd notice: 66% of teenagers borrow print books at least once a year (32% monthly), as do 55% of young adults (28% monthly). Those people also use other resources that libraries pay for, more actively than most: 53% of teenagers and 55% of young adults use online databases at least annually, including 21% and 30% monthly (as compared to 33% and 14% overall, an unfortunate but not surprising finding).
- The "library brand" is books. That's clear. The suggestion in the report that the library community should find ways to "stretch the brand" is sensible—but that means building from strength, not abandoning that strength. "When prompted," citizens see many community roles for the library.

There's a lot more data here, all well presented. Appendix A is 72 pages of supporting tables, some of them repeated from the primary text. Appendix B—which I haven't read—is an oddity: a random sam-

pling of 10% of the responses to open-ended questions. It's 2,000-odd statements in five areas, grammatical and spelling problems and all.

So What?

Alane Wilson at *It's all good* posted "Alane's back..." on January 3, 2006, quoting a 1949 book *The Library's Public* and viewing the *lack* of change with alarm. George Needham at *It's all good* posted "Public Use of the Library and Other Sources of Information" on January 4, 2006, quoting a 1950 book (with that title) based on 1947 survey work—and George is less alarmed, since he finds substantial improvement in public library use over the past 50-odd years. In 1947, 20% of adults had library cards; now, 75% do. In 1947, 18% had visited a public library within the past year; now, 73% do. He finds evidence that librarians have *done* what 1947 respondents suggested. If you've seen circulation figures from 50 years ago, you'd be hard-pressed to say public libraries aren't being used *far* more.

George notes the biggest consistency: People don't see libraries as a primary information source, *and never have*. "The ubiquity of the web is making it even less likely that a formal institution like the library, with all our rules, service policies, limited hours, and other historical baggage, is ever going to change that." I'd go further: People are sensible—and it would not be *sensible* for most people to view public libraries as a primary information source. I have to quote the final paragraph in that post:

The best use of the Perceptions report is to use a triage approach. Look at what respondents have said they want, and then figure out: a.) what you already offer but that you need to be more "in your face" about advertising; b.) what you could do by realigning resources, eliminating redundancies, or changing legacy policies; and c.) pipedreams. Just make sure not to confuse what you can't do (pipedreams) with what you don't want to do (because it's always been done this way)!

The Army's old recruiting jingle never said "Be all that you want to be." It said, "Be all that you *can* be." That's an interesting goal for public libraries, one worth pursuing. I would add to George's comment that you need to see where you stand *in your community*—because every community is different.

Read the report. Recognize what has and hasn't changed. Don't panic. Do see where it and many other reports and conversations lead you.

Interesting & Peculiar Products Talk to the Hand?

It's not a product yet, but even the early description in the November 22, 2005 *PC Magazine* is enough to give me serious creeps: Programmable dermal displays. Which is to say, embedded *data screens* visible on the back of the hand, "activated by three billion display nano-robots underneath the skin." You touch the back of your hand and the data becomes visible, based on "billions of fixed and mobile nanobots monitoring vital signs and physiological parameters throughout the body." Power would come from your glucose supplies. Robert A. Freitas, Jr. (who presented this concept in *Nanomedicine, Volume 1: Basic Capabilities*) thinks it's a wonderful idea. I'm not quite ready for that—or, for that matter, for billions of nanobots coursing through my bloodstream. Your eagerness for internal technology may be greater than mine.

Community Search

A "first looks" review article in the November 22, 2005 *PC Magazine* considers five sites that I assume are fine examples of social software—"sites where users share among themselves the bookmarks they've created and content they've encountered." So far, I haven't signed up for much social software (I had an Orkut account which might still be there, but abandoned the site after a month or two). "Communities of knowledgeable, interested people can identify relevant sites with a greater accuracy than a search engine." That's doubtless true, if the community is composed of people I have some knowledge of and trust in—although it's also true that such communities can serve as enormous echo chambers.

This is a group review but I think it makes more sense to discuss it here than in *PC PROGRESS*. Although there's no Editors' Choice—not surprising at this early stage of the game—two services did earn four dots out of five. Clipmarks (www.clipmarks.com) lets you "tag, store, organize and share snippets of Web pages" once you install an IE plug-in (although the installation, oddly, doesn't enable the Clipmarks toolbar!). Yahoo! My Web 2.0 offers what the review calls a "more fully realized social bookmark engine than either del.icio.us or Shadows"—easier to navigate, smarter about organizing tags and bookmarks, and quite possibly already on your machine via the Yahoo! Toolbar (available for IE and Firefox). Yes, it

does have a cloud view, and you can decide whether your tagged pages are available to everyone, your own community, or are private. The review concludes, "[A] massive user base coupled with generally well-rounded features make My Web the best place to get social about your bookmarks."

Perhaps the most surprising part of the review, to me at least, was the *lowest-rated* service, with 1.5 dots: del.icio.us. "The place is a cluttered mess. Even after you learn your way around, you may find little reason to stay. At first glance, it's hard to tell what's going on..." The section ends with "Much as we like the idea of accessing our bookmarks from anywhere, we don't find del.icio.us particularly palatable." Being first apparently isn't the advantage it used to be. (The other two are Jeteye, "a little bit community, a little bit blog, and a dash of wiki," and Shadows—sort of like del.icio.us but with a much spiffier interface and more compelling community features.)

The Last DVD Burner?

The Pioneer DVR-R100, an internal DVD burner lists for \$90, supports every writable DVD format except DVD-RAM (including both dual-layer formats)—and "supports what many believe to be the fastest speeds that the...formats will ever attain." That's not unreasonable: There are physical reasons to limit write speed, particularly for such precise media not carried in a cartridge. Thus, while the November 22, 2005 *PC Magazine* review acknowledges that newer models will probably appear, including some from Pioneer, this one may have "real staying power" because it reaches the peak of what's likely.

How fast is fast? The drive burned both forms of dual-layer DVD at 8x, producing a full 8.5GB disc in less than 20 minutes (even though the media are rated for 2.4x and 4x speeds respectively). It also burned 6X-rated DVD-RW media at 8x, taking 5:20 to write two 1GB files and finalized the disc. Oddly, the same job took more than nine minutes using 8x DVD+RW media. As for good old CD-R, it took 2:15 to burn 65 minutes of CD audio on a 40X blank; that's 29X real-world speed, which is astonishingly good.

While the software bundle doesn't include MP3 ripping (but Windows Media Player does), it's a fine Ulead bundle, including digital media production, photo and video editors, a media manager, and a backup utility.

Roku SoundBridge Radio

“You’ve got access to tons of digital music and Internet radio stations through your PC—what are you doing still waking up to that clock radio?” That’s the lead for a short, enthusiastic *Sound & Vision* blurb for this \$399 device—which is basically a radio with wifi so it can pick up signals from your PC. Of course, you’ll have to leave your PC on and active all night so you can wake up to internet radio, but that’s a small price to pay for a fancy alarm clock. Right?

Laser-speed Ink Jet Printer

The December 6, 2005 *PC Magazine* awards an Editors’ Choice to the \$449 Ricoh Aficio G700, a printer that “doesn’t fit well into the usual categories.” It sprays ink directly on paper, but the ink is a gel and dries almost instantly. That allows higher speeds—faster printing on color business documents than any color *laser* printer PC has tested. Print quality is also laserlike: good for text, not so hot for photos.

Cheap Speakers

Jim Louderback continues his quirky off-and-on survey of cheap PC components. This time, he’s looking for “a decent set of stereo speakers—with subwoofer—for less than \$50.” I’d suggest that you have to stretch “decent” pretty far to meet that price point, but maybe my standards are too high. In any case, Louderback’s favorite was the Logitech X-230, \$49.99, although the Altec Lansing VS2221 at the same price yielded slightly higher ratings from an informal listening panel. Worst, unsurprisingly: a Cyber Acoustics set for \$25, and apparently not worth even that much. For \$50, you can get a pretty good set of headphones, but I’m not so sure about speakers.

“Software Giant Killers”?

The title on the December 2005 *PC World* story may be a bit overstated, but some of these free software alternatives might be worth a try, if you’re seriously cheap or just want to avoid certain software companies. OpenOffice isn’t Microsoft Office, but it is free, and the 2.0 version appears to be fairly competent for word processing and spreadsheet purposes—but not if you’re using group-edit features. ZoneAlarm has always been a competitive firewall product; while the beta MS Windows AntiSpyware is good, it’s not as good as the \$30 Webroot SpySweeper. Picasa is a first-rate image organizer; GIMP works well as a graphics

application if you’re experienced. They review MusicMatch Jukebox 10 well, but I think the Plus version is worth the \$20.

©2 Perspective: The Commons

What NC Means to Me

Two papers inspired this PERSPECTIVE, which is also a formal declaration of increased permissions for *Cites & Insights* and *Walt at random*. One, “Are Creative Commons-NC licenses harmful?” is by Erik Möller. The main copy is at www.intelligentdesigns.net/Licenses/NC, as a wiki article accompanied by discussion. I’ll get to the second later.

Are Creative Commons-NC licenses harmful?

Möller dislikes the NC (NonCommercial) Creative Commons option, speaking as part of the Free Content community. I’m capitalizing Free Content because it’s clear that this community, at least as represented in this paper, has its own definition of “free.” As far as I’m concerned, everything in *Cites & Insights* is free content—but it’s clearly not Free Content.

One particular licensing option, however, is a growing problem for the free content community. It is the...non-commercial use only (-NC) option. The "non-commercial use only" variants of the Creative Commons licenses are non-free, and can in one way make the situation worse than the traditional copyright model: many people can or will make the licensing choice only once. In a collaborative context, license changes can be difficult or even impossible. It is therefore crucial that the choice is an informed one.

It’s an interesting twist on language to claim that NC-licensed content is “non-free.” You’re free to use, reproduce, or distribute NC-licensed content—you just can’t charge for it. Apparently the Free Content community gets to define “free” as it chooses.

The key problems with -NC licenses are as follows:

- * They make your work incompatible with a growing body of free content, even if you do want to allow derivative works or combinations.
- * They may rule out other basic uses which you want to allow.
- * They support current, near-infinite copyright terms.
- * They are unlikely to increase the potential profit from your work, and a share-alike license serves the goal to protect your work from exploitation equally well.

The second and bullets are incorrect: The NC license can't *prevent* a copyright owner from allowing other uses. The last is an interesting assertion, one that says you're never going to get more returns from any material that's already appeared. This presumes that no CC-licensed blog has ever been turned into a book, that nobody distributing CC-licensed music has ever successfully turned it into a CD for sale, that no publisher has ever seen a CC-licensed article and paid to use it. Sure, that won't happen with most of the blogs or photos or other stuff carrying Creative Commons licenses, but "unlikely" is a far cry from impossible.

Incompatibility?

The "incompatibility" section of the article seems mostly to say that Free Content communities won't abide NC content. The reasons given are opaque enough that you'd need to read the original article. The Free Content community apparently insists that commercial use must be allowed for content to be free (if you can't sell it, it isn't free). It's an interesting philosophy. It gets even stricter:

All Creative Commons licenses make it clear that it is possible for the content creator to give special permission that goes beyond the terms of the license to any interested party. However, this, too, is insufficient. Any large free content community is likely to reject content under special permission, because it would exclude valid third party uses: from local initiatives that make use of the content in schools or community newspapers, to companies which distribute DVDs or printed copies, to useful and compliant mirror sites. This is true for Wikimedia as well: material which is under special permission is explicitly forbidden and will be deleted.

So the policies I'm going to state later in this piece don't matter for Wikimedia and other Free Content sites. Apparently, it's "our way or the highway"—use a Free Content-approved license or you're shunned.

Long copyright terms

The "existing copyright terms" argument is a red herring. If you want to shorten the term of any protection, you can always add a Founder's Copyright (dedicating your work to the public domain after 28 years) or other term limitation. The licenses that bear the Free Content Seal of Approval *also* fall within current copyright terms.

Non-commercial

Here's the key clause in the Creative Commons NC license: "You may not exercise any of the rights granted to You in any manner that is primarily in-

tended for or directed toward commercial advantage or private monetary compensation."

That seems straightforward and flexible. It does not say, "You can't ever make money from this content." It says your uses can't be *primarily* intended for or directed toward commercial advantage or private compensation. The article goes on to suggest that NC would bar use on any ad-supported blog. I don't see that at all. Compilations are another matter, and I would agree that NC tends to prevent use of an item in a commercial compilation. That's likely to be one reason people *use* BY-NC instead of BY on its own.

The most obvious argument in favor of -NC licenses is that they prevent your work from commercial exploitation by others. First, it is important to realize that there are commercial scenarios which are not affected by your license choice. This includes support and tutoring, documentation, commentary, sampling, and many other uses around the work which are legal regardless of the license. Whatever your license says, the user does not have to accept it, and can simply treat the work as if it was under normal copyright. What -NC can regulate are distribution and modification of the work itself beyond what the law allows.

True: NC doesn't prevent fair use. The article goes on to say, in essence, because of the internet you're never going to make money from distribution of NC content: "The potential to benefit financially from mere distribution is therefore quite small." Planning to collect your essays into a book or sell CD-quality copies of your songs, on a CD, for a reasonable sum? "Where [the potential to benefit financially] exists due to a predominance of old media, it is likely to disappear rapidly." Books, CDs, any physical medium—they're all doomed anyway. Indeed, the writer rejects the possibility: "Any market built around content which is available for free must either rely on goodwill or ignorance." Or added value, as in the possibilities I mention here.

Now things get strange. Möller says any true Free Content must be available for commercial use—then goes on to offer this option:

Indeed, to make a substantial profit with your work, a company will have to provide added value beyond what is available for free. An -NC license stops any such attempt to add value in its tracks. But there is an alternative. The Creative Commons "Share-Alike" licenses require any work derived from your own to be made available as free content, as a whole. (The licenses without a share-alike clause only guarantee that the part of the work created by you remains free.) Any company trying to exploit your work will have to make their "added value" available for free to everyone. Seen like

this, the "risk" of exploitation turns into a potentially powerful benefit.

How can there be commercial use if the derived work *must be made available as free content*? There's a contradiction here, or an oxymoron. The remaining discussion has this through-the-looking-glass quality: NC is bad because a compilation would have to be given away; Share-Alike is better because...a compilation would have to be given away. Huh? Apparently there's "commercial use" which is also "free" but isn't "free" enough for the NC license.

One of the suggestions in the expanded version of the article:

If you see work online which is licensed under an -NC license, please kindly thank the creator for making their work available for free, and ask them to change the license (feel free to include a copy of this text, or a link to the network location where you found it).

But I *read* the text, and it *makes no sense* to me. I'm insulted by being told that nobody would buy a compilation of my work—and bemused because I can use an alternative license that simultaneously allows commercial use and requires that the commercial product be free. Apparently, I don't have the secret Free Content decoder ring.

There follow admonitions about CC's responsibility to explain how much you lose by using NC, and again pointing to the incomprehensible explanation in this document.

Hopefully, Creative Commons will contribute to the effort of informing creators that the seemingly simple choice of forbidding commercial use is not so simple at all.

I must be very simple indeed. Nothing in the shorter 10/4/2005 article or the complete intelligent-designs.net version convinced me to move away from BY-NC or helped me understand how Free Content-approved licenses were better. Maybe I'm misreading the article; if not, the argument doesn't make sense.

Proposed Best Practice Guidelines to Clarify NC

That's not quite the full title, which ends with "the meaning of 'NonCommercial' in the Creative Commons licenses" instead of "NC." I won't provide a URL for the three-page PDF; the URL is too long. Go to the Creative Commons blog, specifically to this post: creativecommons.org/weblog/entry/5752. It points you to a list entry which has the PDF as an attachment (!), the link "here." It also points you to a truly remarkable

list of "yes and no" hypothetical cases at wiki.creativecommons.org/wiki/NonCommercial_use_cases (all addresses in *C&I* are stripped of the "http://" since they're not live links anyway).

The best practice guidelines—which at this point are in draft form and represent *guidelines*, not a formal expansion of the license itself—are "intended to assist creators and users to better understand the scope of permitted uses" beyond fair use.

If you're planning to create something with a Creative Commons license that includes the NC provision, or if you're thinking of using something with such a license, I **strongly recommend** that you read these guidelines, just as I **recommend** that you read Möller's article, since you may not see the contradictions that I see. As I read through the guidelines, I realized that they overstate the protections I wish to retain for *C&I* and *W.a.r.*

The guidelines appear to forbid *any* use by commercial entities other than copy shops or ISPs acting on behalf of individuals and nonprofits. A footnote even suggests restricting "nonprofit" from the IRS definition to one excluding religious organizations.

Then, if you are a person or a nonprofit, there are seven other questions to be answered before you can be sure that your use is covered by the NC clause. Briefly (omitting some portions of definitions), the questions boil down to:

- Is the content being used to advertise third-party products or services? If so, it's not NC.
- Do you have to view such ads to get to the content? If so, it's not NC.
- Is the content used *in conjunction with* such ads where it's the primary draw "or a substantial amount"? If so, it's not NC.
- Is money changing hands for a service provided in connection with the work? *If so:*
- Is the money incidental to an NC purpose, for example paying a copy shop for the costs of producing course packs? If so, it is NC.
- Is money changing hands in connection with the use of the work itself? If so, there are four possibilities, two OK, two not; the OK cases are where another work includes an NC-licensed work that's not a big piece of the overall work (that's oversimplified) or where the money is an optional contribution.
- Is money changing hands for a derivative use? If so, the cases are similar to the previous

question, but are affected by whether Share-Alike is also part of the license.

Trust me: the complete document is clearer than this compressed version. It also strikes me as more stringent than I wish to be. So, for now at least, I've drawn up my own interpretation.

Allowable “NonCommercial” Uses

I regard this interpretation as binding on all original material published in *Cites & Insights* or on *Walt at random* from now (January 29, 2006) until such time as this interpretation—which will be on my website at waltcrawford.name/ncinterp.htm and at cites.boisestate.edu/ncinterp.htm—is removed from those websites and a revocation notice appears in *Cites & Insights* and in a blog posting (if *W.a.r.* still exists).

At that point, usage restrictions would fall back to the Creative Commons BY-NC license or any more flexible license I may have chosen to adopt at that point. As with the CC licenses themselves, a revocation notice would *only* affect future content, not content that has already appeared.

The short form

If you're making money or trying to make money primarily or substantially by using more than fair-use portions of my stuff, I want a piece of the action. Otherwise, all I want is attribution—but I always appreciate notification (never mandatory) and a copy of any published work (also never mandatory).

That short form differs from the NC interpretation in one way: I don't care whether you're a person, an IRS-classified nonprofit, a political nonprofit (one that IRS doesn't recognize for deductions), or a commercial entity. If your uses aren't designed to make money primarily or substantially by using my stuff, fine with me.

The longer form

I don't particularly care who uses my stuff. I don't have to agree with your politics. I don't have to agree with your business model.

You may use original material that I distribute under the Creative Commons BY-NC license under most circumstances, as long as you attribute it to me properly. Exceptions are cases where my material is used in a (planned) moneymaking venture where comparable material would be paid for as a matter of course under normal copyright law.

So, for example (all of these, I believe, extensions to the NC permissions), and noting that all of these

uses require proper attribution and that you might let me know about them as a courtesy:

- You can reprint one of these essays in a membership publication even if the editor is paid and there are ads, as long as most contributors aren't paid.
- You can reprint one of these essays in any publication or other medium that's free (and freely available) to the end user, even if it's sponsored at the back end and the publication or other medium contains ads.
- You can repost a blog entry or one of these essays on a blog or website that carries ads, even if the ads are contextual ads that pop up because of the content in the essay or the post, unless the *primary purpose* of the blog or website is to post other people's essays and gain ad revenue from them. You'd have to be pretty egregious to have difficulties here. If you're making \$10,000 a month from ads and sponsorship, 90% of your material is original, and you decide to quote an entire essay of mine with credit—well, good for you!
- If you're compiling a book of essays and most authors are not paid for their chapters, you can include one of these essays even though you and the publisher will presumably make money from the book. I would obviously appreciate notification and a copy of the book. (Consider this the book-chapter exception where most authors are academics or otherwise give away their work.)
- On the other hand, you *cannot* compile a book of *C&I* essays, add an introduction or one or two unpaid essays, and sell that without my permission and a license fee. (Otherwise, I wouldn't have the –NC license at all!)
- None of this is creative fiction, at least not intentionally. I'm not sure what “derivative” means for nonfiction essays, other than translations or abridgements, but if you want to derive work from what I've done in CC-licensed form, that's your business. I don't use the NonDeriv clause. (I can see that translation or abridgement constitutes derivative work. If you want to translate one of my essays, provide proper attribution, and sell the results, I believe you've added enough value to deserve the proceeds. More power to you.)

One or two of these bullets grant significant additional rights. The second one means a library automation vendor could reprint the entire LIBRARY 2.0 AND “LIBRARY 2.0” issue with its own ads attached and pass it out for free, as long as it’s properly attributed. If the vendor goes on to say “Walt Crawford supports Miracle Library Software” there’s a problem—but it’s not a copyright problem.

I don’t buy the Free Content argument. I still believe that at some point it may make sense to bundle a bunch of these essays, probably with added content, as a PoD book or even a “real book.” I want to reserve the right to do that.

I hope that’s clear enough. It won’t satisfy Free Content people, but that’s not my problem.

Trends & Quick Takes

Waiting for High-Definition Discs?

The companies behind HD-DVD promised players and movies would be on the U.S. market in time for the 2005 holiday season. This was particularly important to them because Blu-ray, the higher-capacity disc backed by many more companies, clearly wouldn’t be on the market until some time this year. Unless there’s a definition of “holiday season” and “on the market” that escapes me, HD-DVD blew it.

Realistically, the hardware and software both need to be in stores by September or October if they’re going to be significant during that holiday season. Assuming there’s no surprise combination of the two formats, the 2006 holiday season may be the initial bloodletting in a battle that consumers may or may not want to take part in.

That’s not the real reason for this particular TRENDS piece. High-definition DVD is still a waiting game, although the technology is well understood. The issue here is mostly one for the tens of millions of people (probably including a few of you) who have already purchased high-definition TV sets. (That is, sets capable of showing at least 720p broadcasts at full resolution, which means having at least 720 picture elements vertically and, for wide-screen TVs, at least 1280 horizontally. Most HDTV is broadcast at 1080i, which involves rescaling for 1280x720 sets. The highest definition is 1080p—and sets that legitimately show that resolution just came on the market in time

for, you got it, the 2005 holiday season. Such sets should have 1920x1080 resolution; examples are Sony’s new SXR-D rear-projection sets at \$4,000 to \$5,000.)

So you have a high-res TV. Your DVDs look *wonderful*, scaled up from 480p to whatever your TV shows, but you may know that DVD only produces 480p resolution—much better than the up-to-480i of standard-definition TV, but nowhere near what your set’s capable of. You’ve got your checkbook ready to buy one of those high-def DVD players and watch the best movies in *true* high definition, like looking out a window on reality.

Does your set have an HDMI connector? There’s a pretty good chance the answer is no, particularly if it’s more than a year or so old.

Guess what? If you answered no, then as things stand at this writing, *you won’t get high-def DVDs*. You can buy the player and you can buy the discs—but what you’ll see is 480p, same as on current DVDs. The sound may be better and the encoding might be cleaner, but there won’t be much visible difference.

The villains are our old friend DRM and movie companies’ paranoia about amateur piracy. (Not true piracy; real pirates can get around the DRM or have sourced their phony DVDs from their friends within studios anyway.) HDMI includes strong DRM. Right now, it appears that players will be forbidden to produce high definition through any connector *except* HDMI. For everything else—component or DVI—the player will gracefully “down-rez” the picture to regular DVD quality.

So you paid the big bucks to be ready for the ultimate movie experience right away? So sorry; you lose. If you wonder why some pundits think that high-def DVD might stall for quite a while, that’s another reason besides the format war.

...To Go With Your High-Def TV?

There’s another gotcha for some of you with existing high-def TVs. Most broadcast and cable HDTV you see is 1080i, as already noted; the “i” stands for “interlaced.” That means you get 540 lines (every other line) in one pass (a 60th of a second), then the other 540 lines in the next pass, making 30 frames per second of 1080-resolution TV. Old-style TV is also interlaced, but with a maximum total of 480 lines. Your set is supposed to take the two 540-line “frames” and weave them into a single 1080-line picture.

Unfortunately, that's not what some TVs do. Gary Merson ran tests on many current HDTVs using special test patterns (as reported in *The Perfect Vision* 64, December 2005) and found that *most* HDTV sets currently on the market don't weave a 1080-line picture. Instead, they "bob"—they upconvert each 540-line field to 1080 lines and show it independently. You're not getting the resolution you paid for.

The problem should go away over the next year or two, as more powerful processing chips take over the marketplace. Right now, according to the report, four companies claim that their sets properly "deinterlace" or weave: Hitachi, JVC, Pioneer, and Toshiba—and all of the sets from those makers passed Merson's tests, except for one small Toshiba display that it "sources" from another company.

RSS Advertising?

You might want to look at Geoff Daily's article in *EContent* 28:11 (November 2005): "Feed the need: The state of RSS advertising." Unlike most writers, he gets one point straight in the opening sentence: "While the Internet is often referred to as a medium, in reality its role is that of a dynamic environment through which various media are implemented." He then goes on to note "one of the most nascent forms of Web-enabled media," RSS. I'd argue that RSS is also not a medium; it's a transmission route for several different media. (Oddly, he also assumes use of a desktop aggregator; I'd guess that by now web-based aggregators and aggregators built into other web services dominate the field.)

So where there's a medium there must be ads, right? Maybe not in books and sound recordings, but everywhere else. "As more consumers realize the time-saving benefits of being able to scan numerous Web sites for new content quickly via an RSS reader, it's no surprise that advertisers are clamoring for new ways to reach those eyeballs."

Feedster estimates that by the time the article appeared total RSS ads would amount to \$1 to \$2 million a month. There's a claim that Forrester shows RSS adoption rates of only 2% of internet users (can that be right? or is it that only 2% of internet users *know* they're using RSS?), but advertisers always want to reach a growing market.

Do you *want* ads in your feeds? Charlene Li of Forrester takes a typically businesslike approach: Ads are *wonderful*. "I think in RSS, I want to hear about ads and information as long as I know and trust the

advertisers." So you'll only get ads from companies you "know and trust"?

Some aggregators are all for it. NewsGator notes that it can tell an advertiser *who's reading* particular content—what could be better? And advertisers know that readers explicitly opted in to the content, similar to magazine subscribers. But, although magazines are the model one Forrester analyst likes to use, magazines are different: You can zip right past the ads when you're reading articles, then go back to them later if they're interesting. Maybe that would work with ads embedded in RSS ads—or maybe, as Li suggests, "that feed goes bye-bye" if the ads are intrusive.

You could get ads from several points: The feeds themselves (as ads *within* posts or as separate posts), from the aggregator, or via feed search engines using something like AdSense. NewsGator thinks you'll see ads from all three sources.

Feedster embeds ads in its search feeds, but only one ad per feed (and if there's nothing new from the search, you won't get a new ad). Of course, you might actually *sign up* for an ad feed in some cases, if the ads mention bargains.

There's already been one legal hassle, with a blogger claiming Bloglines was "reproducing" his blog, stripping it of contact info, and adding its own ads. That's interesting; so far, I've never seen Bloglines ads—and "stripping it of contact info" is pretty much inherent in aggregation. But the question continues, who has the right to put ads into RSS? If RSS really does become the dominant form of internet content traffic, it's a question that will have to be answered—and yes, you'll probably have to put up with advertising. Or, if you're a hotshot blogger, you may *want* RSS advertising for revenue.

Powerline Broadband

Broader broadband? That's what Michael J. Miller uses in the subhead for a "Forward Thinking" piece in the November 22, 2005 *PC Magazine*, in which he bemoans the fact that only about 42% of U.S. households have broadband. He notes a couple of "citywide WiFi" initiatives—but he seems most pleased with a power-line broadband system being installed in Manassas, Virginia. "Each household will get a modem that plugs into an electric outlet and connects to an Ethernet cable. Connections are 300 to 800Kbps for just under \$30 per month." He ends by talking about "faster broadband" that's "affordable for everyone"—but I'm not sure how the Manassas system qualifies.

300Kbps is faster than dial-up, but even 800Kbps is slower than the slowest DSL service most phone companies provide, to say nothing of most cable broadband. As for \$30—well, with the cable-vs.-DSL competition around here, at least, most DSL customers apparently wind up at around \$20 to \$25 a month (after a \$15/month initial period).

My Back Pages

Just because pieces appear here doesn't necessarily mean they have no significance. The dividing line between MY BACK PAGES and Quicker Takes is fuzzy, as the first two items here illustrate.

Digital Preservation Paradox

Paraphrasing a great post from my colleague Merrilee Proffitt at *hangingtogether* (December 9, 2005): What if you don't see how digital items can be preserved in a useful form—and what if you write about that a lot, mostly in digital form (naturally).

If you're right, no one will know: The work will disappear.

If you're wrong, "your wrong predictions will mock you from every digital repository and web archive."

As Merrilee notes, there's a gotcha: Chances are, your mostly-digital skepticism will be printed out and filed or someone will refer to it in a print publication. Still, it's an interesting quandary.

Me? I have no doubt many digital items will be preserved successfully—and that many more won't be. That may be a good thing. It may not.

Getting the Results You Pay For

I don't read the *Wall Street Journal* regularly; this item from the December 12, 2005 issue was passed on—very indirectly, as it was posted to "reedelscustomers" and came to me from someone on that list.

Seems a woman with a Ph.D. in physiology was hired by one of Elsevier's subsidiaries, Excerpta Medica, to write an article about Eprex, an anemia drug from Johnson & Johnson. A J&J-sponsored study attempted to determine whether patients would do well taking Eprex once a week, since a rival drug only needed to be taken once a week.

The writer was *instructed* to emphasize the "main message" that 79.3% of people with anemia had done well with once-a-week doses. But the report she saw

said 63.2% had done well, as defined by the original study protocol. The higher figure used a broader definition of success and excluded patients who dropped out or didn't follow all the rules.

The instruction sheet also noted that some patients taking large doses didn't do well with once-a-week doses but warned that the point "has not been discussed with marketing and is not definitive!"

The article appeared in *Clinical Nephrology*—highlighting the 79.3% figure and not mentioning the 63.2% figure. The article also didn't credit the writer or Excerpta Medica.

Draw your own conclusions.

Jimmy Wales—as Edited by Jimmy Wales

A December 19, 2005 *Wired News* story by Evan Hansen notes that Jimmy Wales, founder and head of Wikipedia, has changed the Wikipedia entry on "Jimmy Wales" 18 times. He has deleted references to Larry Sanger as a cofounder (seven times), as one example. He's also repeatedly revised the description of Bomis, a search site he founded. When interviewed, Wales said he did the editing to correct factual errors and provide a more rounded version.

"People shouldn't do it, including me. I wish I hadn't done it. It's in poor taste." Yet Wales kept doing it. Wikipedia's guidelines caution against editing your own biography. Of course, Wales had only the best intentions. It's worth noting that Wikipedia's editing logs (and Wales' non-use of an opaque pseudonym) make this self-editing easy to spot.

What's NeXT?

The Bay Area NeXT Group seems to have dissolved, according to a December 21, 2005 *Wired News* story. That may be less remarkable than it taking this long. After all, NeXT stopped making computers in early 1993—and sold about 50,000 computers from its 1985 founding until it gave up the hardware ghost. (NeXT didn't make computers for eight years; it took a *long* time for its first computer to emerge.) If anything remains of NeXT, it is the apparent use of NeXTSTEP as the basis for Mac OS X—and Apple paid a *fortune* to acquire that software (and make Jobs happy and wealthier, to be sure).

Coincidentally, I read Randall E. Stross' *Steve Jobs & the NeXT Big Thing* in December. Published not too long after NeXT became a software company (Atheneum, 1993, ISBN 0-689-12135-0), it's a good read and a fascinating story. If you're one of those who

believe that everything Steve Jobs touches turns to gold, I recommend it.

All Those Toolbars

John Donahe has a great letter in the November 22, 2005 *PC Magazine*, noting that after subscribing to three computer magazines and several newsletters for some years, he's now solved all but two problems with his computer. He now has all the "must-have" software and "can't-live-without" toolbars and sidebars suggested in those publications.

Now, my only two remaining problems are: (1) I had to uninstall all my applications on the hard drive to make room for utilities software; and (2) the workable size of my monitor screen is now 3 ½ by 2 inches.

How many toolbars are in your browser window? How much room does that leave for content?

Why High Fidelity is Not like Personal Computing

The Absolute Sound publishes an annual list of all the hot stuff by their standards, the Editors' Choice Awards. Since the Editors' Choice list is arranged by price with no comparative grading, I thought it would be amusing to see how *little* you could spend on a stereo system composed of recommended high-end components—and how *much* you could spend.

For a minimalist system (CDs as the only sound source), the least turns out to be \$1,220: \$199 Paradigm Atom speakers ("a staggering value"), \$399 NAD C 320BEE integrated amp ("such a strong taste of the high end that you might be tempted to think it doesn't get any better than this"), and \$399 Cambridge Azur 540D CD player, which supports DVD Audio as well as CD.

\$1,220 is a fair amount for a stereo system when you can buy a boombox for \$50 or a pretty good integrated system for \$700, but these are all high-end components according to some of those who define the high end.

What if you have a tad more to spend?

You can *also* put together a CD-only stereo system with the Nóla Grand Reference III speakers (\$126,000), MBL 9011 Monoblock amplifiers (\$74,000—I *think* that's for a pair) and MBL 6010 D preamp (\$18,920), and MBLs 1621 A CD transport and 1611 E digital-to-analog converter (\$42,510 together). Total: \$261,430, or **214 times** as much. Try doing that with PCs (or automobiles, for that matter!)

Who Knew?

I was well aware that my local public library has a good range of databases and makes them available via its website. The last time I thought about using them, it required a browser proxy setting that interfered with some other websites—so I stopped. In the course of preparing the Midwinter issue, I tried them again. The problem has apparently been fixed. Enter your library card number, and you're good. Which means I'll probably use my public library for the full text of articles more often than I have in the past.

Being as egotistical as the next writer, I did an ego search on what seemed like the two most likely databases, *Expanded Academic Index ASAP* and *InfoTrac OneFile*.

I was startled to find that, as of this writing, I have 237 articles listed and available in *Expanded Academic Index ASAP* and 242—presumably a superset of the 237—in *Infotrac OneFile*. All through my public library! Amazing.

In a bit more exploration, I was delighted to see that *C&I* is in "Freely Accessible Social Science Journals." I'm honored. Apparently that list is maintained by SerialsSolutions. It would be wonderful to have *all* freely-accessible periodicals, refereed and otherwise, available in one directory.

"Three Pixels for Every Cent"

Here's an odd way to measure value, as in a *Sound & Vision* bit for Dell's W5001C 50" plasma HDTV. The point they're making is that \$3,799 is really cheap for a big plasma set, I guess—but the native resolution, 1366x768, isn't enough for 1080p (and requires re-scaling *all* HDTV content or having black bars above and below 720p programs). More to the point, the resolution doesn't have much to do with the size. A \$2,000 32" plasma set with the same resolution would presumably be an even better value: That would be more than *five* pixels per cent. Right?

A more useful value measure might be dollars per square inch of viewable screen. For example, \$3 per square inch might be good value for a high-res big-screen TV. The Dell isn't quite that cheap.

No Single Path

Maybe it's odd, given my strong predilection for "and not or," but when I read stereo magazines, I've always assumed *accurate reproduction* was the goal. The singers and musicians should be making music; the sound

system—whether home theater, MP3 player, or \$250,000 stereo system—should be accurately reproducing what was recorded.

I grew disillusioned with *Stereophile* as it became obvious that, although they did measurements of systems, the measurements *didn't matter*. If a multi-thousand-dollar tube amp putting out a few watts of power showed wild deviations in frequency response, it was OK if the reviewer thought it made music sound nice. Several reviewers made it clear, over time, that they review audio devices as musical instruments, not as neutral reproduction devices. The founder of *Stereophile*, since departed, called this “euphonic distortion”—it does for sound what Kodachrome used to do for pictures (“gives you those nice bright colors...makes all the world a sunny day,” as Paul Simon says).

Art Dudley’s “Resistance is futile” in the December 2005 *Stereophile* gives up the ghost: “I no longer think there’s any one approach that has a greater degree of legitimacy than any other.” If one reviewer just loves the sweetening effects of single-ended triodes and another doesn’t care about music but cares a lot about “soundstage,” well, to each their own.

The only problem is that this makes the review publications worthless until you’ve calibrated your own preferences against a particular reviewer.

I tried a different audiophile publication. They eschew measurements altogether: Only the ears of the reviewer matter. Such is life.

Getting Your Facts Straight

Fred von Lohmann of EFF had a letter in *Stereophile* objecting to portions of an article about copyright. His objections are mostly proper, I believe. Unfortunately, he weakens his case with this sentence:

So, unless you are one of the very few who use “audio” CD-Rs (which cost several times as much as “data” blanks, due to the copyright levy) or consumer DAT recorders, AHRA does not apply to you.

Audio CD-Rs haven’t cost “several times as much” as data CD-Rs for a long time now. The copyright levy is a relatively low percentage of the retail price. After a while, competition kept makers from gouging audio-blank purchasers. From what I’ve seen, the most common ratio is that 30 audio CD-Rs sell for the same price as 50 data CD-Rs: A premium, to be sure, but you just can’t turn \$0.33 per disc vs. \$0.20 per disc into “several times as much.”

The Biggest Wi-Fi Cloud

A charming item in the December 6, 2005 *PC Magazine*: Where’s the biggest wireless hot spot? According to their research, it’s in rural Oregon—700 square miles around Hermiston, extending into four counties and into Washington State. A bunch of local governments and businesses support the rural net, and farmers and small businesses use it; it’s based on meshed wireless repeaters, providing some redundancy.

Holographic Storage, Real Soon Now

I wouldn’t bother mentioning the squib in the December 2005 *PC World* telling us that InPhase Technologies “hopes to bring” a 300GB holographic-storage disc to market this year, or that Optoware’s working on a 1.6TB disc—while it could happen any day now, it’s been projected for the next year or two for a *long* time now. But the last sentence in the squib is noteworthy: “Rumor has it that Hollywood is already working on ways to make these discs a huge pain to use.”

Sometimes It Just Takes a Sentence

The article: a half-page January 2006 *PC World* review of Vlog It, a \$50 program to create video blogs. The first sentence: “Podcasts are old news—the latest trend is video blogs.” By this standard, text blogs must be decrepit ancient history by now, only used by pathetic Luddites.

Masthead

Cites & Insights: Crawford at Large, Volume 6, Number 3, Whole Issue 73, ISSN 1534-0937, a journal of libraries, policy, technology and media, is written and produced by Walt Crawford, a senior analyst at RLG.



Cites & Insights is sponsored by YBP Library Services, <http://www.ybp.com>.

Hosting provided by Boise State University Libraries.

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